

With God in the Crucible, by Peter Storey

reviewed by [David Mosser](#) in the [August 23, 2003](#) issue

Jesus proved that preaching costly discipleship could be hazardous to one's health. Peter Storey gives readers a firsthand encounter with such preaching. His anthology covers nearly 30 years of sermons and lectures, showing what the church stood for and against during a key stage of South African history. In entries dated from November 1966 to November 1992, Storey proclaims a risky faith. This collection is not only thought-provoking; it is a challenge to every preacher who mounts a pulpit.

Storey, a former Methodist bishop in South Africa and now a professor of practical ministry at Duke Divinity School, began his ministry in his father's shadow. He writes of his father, "In the early 1950s he discerned that the newly elected apartheid government in South Africa was driven by an idolatry of race and nation not much different from that of Nazism. . . . He became the first Church leader to publicly denounce apartheid as a sin against God . . . his life taught me that depth of integrity . . . is what counts, and the cost of truth telling will be high, but nothing less is expected of the preacher." The reader quickly discerns where Storey got his fire.

The book's strength lies in its uniqueness. Rather than a history of preaching, Storey presents history through preaching. From the early days of lonely protest to the dismantling of an unjust regime, he shows how faithful (and unfaithful) church voices responded to a nation in crisis.

Storey sets each sermon in its rhetorical and historical context, making clear the original intent and circumstance of the message. The sermons themselves reveal him as a masterful preacher who uses the whole Bible to support his prophetic word. After each sermon Storey defines Afrikaner words that readers would be unlikely to understand.

The foreword by Desmond Tutu further sets Storey's sermons in their historical context and salutes Storey's courage to speak out at a time when very few prominent people raised their voices for freedom and justice. William H. Willimon's

epilogue helps readers understand that these sermons are more than a historically important witness. Willimon writes about the deeply committed theology out of which Storey preaches. Storey is both a consummate pastor and a faithful prophet. Those who split these pastoral roles do themselves and the church a grave disservice. Faithful preachers are both prophetic truth-tellers and loving caregivers.